

William Dunbar to Thomas Jefferson, August 18, 1804, from Thomas Jefferson and Early Western Explorers, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

William Dunbar to Thomas Jefferson

Natchez 18th Augt. 1804

Dear Sir

I have recieved the honor of your letter of the 17th ulto. which suffered a small delay by being enclosed to mr. West & prevented my reply by last post. Fortunately the Expedition had not taken its departure, nor had I possitively engaged any one as Geographer to the party, so that no person can feel disappointment by the suspension, unless it should prove so to Dr. Hunter.

In consequence of the permission you are pleased to grant me, I have determined to make an Excursion up the Washita river and to the hot springs; this interesting part of Louisiana cannot be seen by the part in the Spring, I therefore give it the preference; the springs are supposed to be (by the sinnosities of the river) upwards of 500 miles from the Mississippi; they are Situated near an inferior smaller branch of the Washita not always navigable, so that there may be 40 or more miles to travel by land. Immediately on the receipt of your letter, I wrote to Collo. Freeman to suspend preparations for the principal expedition, and in lieu of the large boat to provide only a good strong, flat-bottomed, broad & safe Canoe or piraugue, fitted up in the plainest manner, and such as may be impelled rapidly against the stream by Six oars, which I have requested him to dispatch with all convenient speed

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manned by a discreet non-commissd. officer and Six privates with 3 months rations. By my letter of the 4th inst. to the Secretary at war, you will have seen that Dr. Hunter was

gone down to New Orleans to expedite the preparations & bring up the Escort: since that time I have further intelligence that if the Expedition had gone up the river, there is no doubt it would have terminated a little beyond the American post of Nakitosh by Spanish opposition. I have now written to Dr. Hunter to put on board the small boat a proportional part of the matters provided, not doubting that he will himself accompany me on this excursion; it will fill up his time agreeably, and will present objects to exercise his talents in his favorite line: at the Washita Settlement we shall meet with old hunters and others capable of giving interesting details of the Countries high up the western rivers, which added to our own researches, will form a mass of information, which I have no doubt will induce Congress to make a more liberal provision for the more important Expedition of the ensuing season. With the highest respect, I have the honor to be, Your most Obedient Servant, William Dunbar

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